



CLIC PAPERS

**LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT
IMPERATIVES FOR SUCCESS**

**Army - Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict
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LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT IMPERATIVES FOR SUCCESS

by

✓ Lt Col William F. Furr, USAF

Army-Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict
④ Langley Air Force Base, Virginia 23665-5000

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CLIC PAPERS

CLIC PAPERS is an informal, occasional publication sponsored by the Army-Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict. They are dedicated to the advancement of the art and science of the application of the military instrument of national power in the low intensity conflict environment. All military members and civilian Defense Department employees are invited to contribute original, unclassified manuscripts for publication as CLIC PAPERS. Topics can include any aspect of military involvement in low intensity conflict to include history, doctrine, strategy, or operations. Papers should be as brief and concise as possible. Interested authors should submit double-spaced typed manuscripts along with a brief, one-page abstract of the paper to Army-Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict, Langley AFB, VA 23665.

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PREFACE

There is a significant difference between military operations in LIC and military operations in mid and high intensity conflict. As a result, the imperatives for military success in these different environments must reflect the unique constraints and must address the unique requirements of each environment. The imperatives for LIC discussed in this paper will not in and of themselves guarantee success. However, they do provide a framework for the successful application of the military instrument of national power in LIC.

Low intensity conflict defies the simple application of traditional military thought. For example, in LIC superior combat power does not guarantee success, and violent action may be counterproductive in the total context of the conflict. Indeed, this "conflict short of war" is dominated by political, economic, or social considerations which may place conflicting demands on the application of military power and resources. These considerations require a reorientation of military thought based on the following imperatives for success: political dominance, unity of effort, adaptability, legitimacy, and patience.

This paper was a direct outgrowth of the efforts of the Army-Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict and the Army Low Intensity Conflict Proponency Office to develop an Army/Air Force doctrinal manual for low intensity conflict. The author wishes to thank Col Lee Dixon, USAF, Lt Col Jay Clem, USAF, and Lt Col Jerry Thompson, USA, for their invaluable contributions to this paper. Their ideas are liberally reflected throughout.

LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT IMPERATIVES FOR SUCCESS

The uniqueness of low intensity conflict (LIC) as a challenge for the US military is well documented. President Reagan's January 1987 White House paper, National Security Strategy of the United States, highlighted this uniqueness by defining the role of the military instrument of national power as follows:

The fundamental tenet of U.S. strategy for dealing with Low Intensity Conflict directed against our friends and allies is that military institutions in threatened states must become able to provide security for their citizens and governments. U.S. Low Intensity Conflict policy, therefore, recognizes that indirect--rather than direct--applications of U.S. military power are the most appropriate and cost effective ways to achieve national goals. . . . The primary role for U.S. armed forces in Low Intensity Conflict is to support and facilitate the security assistance program. The military services must also stand ready to provide more direct forms of military assistance when called upon. . . . U.S. combat forces will be introduced into Low Intensity Conflict situations only as a last resort and when vital national interests cannot otherwise be adequately protected.(1)

It is this uniqueness that requires an examination of the imperatives for the effective use of military forces in LIC versus their use in mid to high intensity conflict. This paper will examine the imperatives discussed in current Army and Air Force doctrine and will propose five imperatives for military success in LIC.

Army Imperatives

Army Field Manual 100-5, Operations, is the Army's "keystone warfighting manual" and articulates the Army's AirLand Battle doctrine. This doctrine focuses on the seizure and retention of the initiative. This manual discusses nine principles of war which "provide timeless general guidance for the conduct of war at strategic, operational, and tactical levels." It also discusses the fundamental tenets of AirLand Battle (initiative, agility, depth, and synchronization) which "describe the characteristics of successful operations." Finally, it discusses ten imperatives or "key operating requirements" for successful operations. These imperatives "provide more specific guidance than the principles of war and the AirLand Battle tenets, and apply to all operations. They are historically valid and

fundamentally necessary for success on the modern battlefield." These ten imperatives are:(2)

- o Ensure unity of effort
- o Anticipate events on the battlefield
- o Concentrate combat power against enemy vulnerabilities
- o Designate, sustain, and shift the main effort
- o Press the fight
- o Move fast, strike hard, and finish rapidly
- o Use terrain, weather, deception, and OPSEC
- o Conserve strength for decisive action
- o Combine arms and sister services to compliment and reinforce
- o Understand the effects of battle on soldiers, units, and leaders

Air Force Imperatives

Air Force Manual 1-1, Basic Aerospace Doctrine, contains the basic doctrine for preparing and employing aerospace forces. This manual defines aerospace doctrine as "a statement of officially sanctioned beliefs and warfighting principles which describe and guide the proper use of aerospace forces in military action." It discusses 12 principles of war that "represent generally accepted truths which have been proved successful in the art and science of conducting war." This manual also discusses nine "imperatives of effectively using aerospace forces in warfare" in terms of a "broad plan of employment that provides purpose and direction to the overall air effort." These imperatives are:(3)

- o Employ aerospace power as an indivisible entity based on objectives, threats, and opportunities
- o Conduct simultaneous strategic and tactical actions
- o Gain control of the aerospace environment
- o Attack an enemy's warfighting potential
- o Consider both offensive and defensive action
- o Exploit the psychological impact of aerospace power
- o Develop a coherent pattern for employing forces
- o Establish one authority for air defense and aerospace control
- o Command, control, communications, and intelligence

Low Intensity Conflict Imperatives

As one would expect, both the Army and the Air Force imperatives focus on the direct application of military forces in combat. However, as President Reagan has stated, the most likely

use of US military forces in LIC will be in an indirect role of supporting our friends and allies. The reality of this role is that US military operations in LIC will be "inherently highly visible, politically sensitive activities which require particular attention to international, US domestic, and host country law, multinational and bilateral agreements, and Congressional authorizations and appropriations."(4)

Low intensity conflict defies the simple application of traditional military thought. For example, in LIC superior combat power does not guarantee success, and violent action may be counterproductive in the total context of the conflict. Indeed, this "conflict short of war" is dominated by political, economic, or social considerations which may place conflicting demands on the application of military power and resources. These considerations require a reorientation of military thought based on the following imperatives for success: political dominance, unity of effort, adaptability, legitimacy, and patience.

Political Dominance

Understanding the dominant role of the political dimension over the military is the first imperative for success in LIC. Indeed, LIC by definition is a political-military struggle in which the connection between the political and the military is so strong that the distinction between the two is blurred. The reality is that LIC is neither truly peace nor truly war, and the solutions are not purely military nor purely political. This condition permeates every aspect of military involvement in LIC from such mundane details as what soldiers and airmen wear to the rules of engagement which are often dictated or restricted by political considerations.

United States military commanders and their soldiers conducting operations in LIC must recognize that the conflict is being prosecuted under the constraints of United States laws, rules, and regulations. And while these constraints may encourage a restrictive or bureaucratic mind-set, the constraints should not be viewed as the sole determinant of military actions, rather, as one very significant element in the commander's estimate of the situation. While the political dimension may be dominant in LIC, traditional military values and principles must be the basis for military involvement in LIC. Good military judgment is not inconsistent with the political nature of LIC.

Unity of Effort

The multidimensional (military, political, economic, and psychological) reality of LIC requires an integrated national policy and strategy. Implementation demands the best efforts of the military, diplomatic, economic, and psychological components of national power from the beginning of the conflict and

throughout our involvement. The employment of these components must be carefully balanced, appropriate to the circumstances, and reflect the fundamental values of our society. Above all, these components must be brought together in a concerted effort.

In LIC, the efforts of each component of national power are affected by the efforts of the other components. Therefore, close interagency and interdepartmental cooperation is paramount. For the military, joint operations using a tailored force structure, often in concert with the military and civil forces of another country, will be the norm. Such non-standard joint and combined operations can only be successful when there is unity of effort directed toward a common goal.

Adaptability

Adaptability is more than flexibility. While flexibility provides the opportunity for using all the elements of military capability in LIC, adaptability requires commanders make these elements suitable to the demands of LIC. This challenge requires commanders be constantly attuned to the political, cultural, and psychological dimensions of the conflict. Meeting this challenge requires both a situation specific and regionally oriented intelligence capability which recognizes the potential strategic consequences of what otherwise might be considered only a tactical situation.

Adaptability in LIC must recognize the risk to national survival posed through nuclear and conventional war will always dominate military doctrine, training, equipment, and force structure. With the limited resources and competing priorities inevitable in a conflict short of war, success will depend on how well the existing doctrine, training, equipment, and force structure is adapted to respond to individual LIC situations.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy in LIC is the willing acceptance of the right or ability of one or the other of the contenders to make and enforce its decisions. For example, a peacekeeper's right to enforce a cease-fire agreement can only be legitimate if it is willingly accepted by all parties to the conflict. In counterinsurgency, short term legitimacy can be obtained through coercion, over the long term the causes of discontent must be addressed to sustain legitimacy.

The loss of legitimacy has the potential for adverse effects on even unrelated efforts. Legitimacy is important not only to those directly involved in the conflict but is also inextricably intertwined with the ability to obtain a United States national consensus and international acceptance or support. Success in LIC will depend upon the ability to gain legitimacy no matter how militarily sound an operation may be.

Patience

Low intensity conflict is a protracted conflict for which there are no quick and easy solutions. For example, peacekeeping operations often require a long-term commitment as the hostile parties attempt to resolve their differences, and peacetime contingency operations consist of singular events which are in reality part of a larger campaign. In such an environment, the ability to achieve national objectives becomes the subject of intense, perpetual debate. Patience is therefore crucial to a successful LIC campaign.

In the LIC context, patience should not be viewed as negating decisive action. Instead, it requires a careful analysis of the ramifications of all actions in terms of their long-term impact. For example, while concentrated firepower may be able to kill a large number of insurgents or terrorists, the collateral death of even one civilian may cause a public opinion backlash. Such an operation, while tactically successful, might well be a strategic setback. Although the ebb and flow of daily events tend to monopolize the attention of those involved, successful military operations in LIC can only be achieved through patience.

Conclusions

There is a significant difference between military operations in LIC and military operations in mid and high intensity conflict. As a result, the imperatives for military success in these different environments must reflect the unique constraints and must address the unique requirements of each environment. The imperatives for LIC discussed in this paper will not in and of themselves guarantee success. However, they do provide a framework for the successful application of the military instrument of national power in LIC. As President Reagan stated,

We must realize that Low Intensity Conflicts are frequently protracted struggles. In addition, most of the instruments of power that we can bring to bear on them work indirectly and over a long period of time. Therefore, we must be patient in such struggles. It is important that we prevail, but especially important that we recognize that we often cannot do so easily or quickly. On the other hand, we do hold important advantages. We represent a model of political and economic development that promises freedom from political domination and economic privation. If we can protect our own security, and maintain an environment of reasonable stability and open trade and communications throughout the Third World, political, economic, and social forces will eventually work to our advantage.(5)

ENDNOTES

1. National Security Strategy of the United States, The White House, Washington DC, January 1987, pp. 33-34.
2. Field Manual 100-5, Operations, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington DC, 5 May 1986, pp. ii, 22-23.
3. Air Force Manual 1-1, Basic Aerospace Doctrine, Headquarters, United States Air Force, Washington DC, 16 March 1984, pp. iii, v, 2-4 - 2-20.
4. Theater Planning and Operations for Low Intensity Conflict Environments, A Practical Guide to Legal Considerations, Special Text, Center for Land Warfare, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 17 September 1986, p. i.
5. National Security Strategy of the United States, p. 34.

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